



# NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS MANUAL

## CHAPTER: 41.23.1

### TITLE: PUBLIC ALERTS

**EFFECTIVE:** 12/10/2017

**REVISED:** Replaces Policy 334

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#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this Chapter is to provide guidelines for alerting the public to important information and soliciting public aid when appropriate.

#### DEFINITIONS:

Definitions related to this Chapter include:

**AMBER Alert** or a **Child Abduction Emergency**—A child abduction alert system. **AMBER** is officially a contrived acronym for **America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response**. The decision to declare an AMBER Alert is made by each police organization that investigates each of the abductions. Public information in an AMBER Alert usually consists of the name and description of the abductee, a description of the suspected abductor, and a description and license plate number of the abductor's vehicle, if available. In Louisiana, only the Louisiana State Police issue AMBER Alerts when requested by law enforcement agencies and once the LSP has determined that the request meets the requirements.

**Emergency Alert System (EAS)**—A national public warning system that requires broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service (SDARS) providers, and direct broadcast satellite (DBS) providers to provide the communications capability to the President to address the American public during a national emergency. The system also may be used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information, such as AMBER alerts and weather information targeted to specific areas. The EAS regulations and standards are governed by the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau of the FCC. EAS has become part of [Integrated Public Alert and Warning System](#) (IPAWS), a program of FEMA.

**NOLA Ready Alert System** – a 24/7 City of New Orleans, New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness system for notifications which can be used for missing children, seniors, and vulnerable adults, including those not covered by the existing AMBER or Silver Alert programs.

**Silver Alert**—A public notification system to broadcast information about missing persons, especially seniors with Alzheimer's Disease, dementia, or other mental disabilities in order to aid in their return.

**POLICY STATEMENT**

1. Public alerts may be employed using the **Emergency Alert System (EAS)**, including but not limited to local radio, television and press organizations and other groups to notify the public of incidents, or enlist the aid of the public, when the exchange of information may enhance the safety of the community. Various types of alerts may be available based upon each situation and the alert system's individual criteria.
2. The department will make every reasonable effort to ensure the criteria for EAS activation exist prior to its use. The department acknowledges the potential harm and detriment that over utilization or false information could cause to the Emergency Alert System. The department will take all necessary precautions to authenticate information and limit the number of interruptions of local radio and television broadcasts.

**MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

3. Members of the New Orleans Police Department should notify their supervisor or Platoon Commander as soon as practicable upon learning of a situation where public notification, a warning or enlisting the help of the media and public could assist in locating a missing person, apprehending a dangerous person or gathering information.

**SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

4. A supervisor apprised of the need for a public alert is responsible to make the appropriate notifications through Communications Services based upon the circumstances of each situation. The supervisor shall ensure that Communications Services promptly notifies his/her Commander, Bureau Chief, Public Affairs Division on duty Public Information Officer and the Superintendent of Police when any public alert is generated.
5. The supervisor in charge of the investigation to which the alert relates is responsible for:
  - (a) Updating alerts by providing any new or changed information to the PIO.
  - (b) Canceling alerts by notifying PIO.
  - (c) Ensuring all appropriate reports are completed and approved in a timely manner.
  - (d) Preparing an after-action evaluation of the investigation to be forwarded to his/her Bureau Chief through the chain of command.

**AMBER ALERTS**

6. The Louisiana AMBER Alert program coordinates the efforts of law enforcement, the media, and the public in an effort to safely recover abducted children.
7. The Special Victims Division – Child Abuse Unit is responsible for all AMBER Alert requests.

**CRITERIA FOR AN AMBER ALERT**

8. The activation criteria for a Louisiana AMBER Alert require that:
  - (a) A law enforcement officer / agency confirms a child under 17 years of age has been abducted.
  - (b) A law enforcement officer / agency believes the circumstances surrounding the abduction indicate that the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
  - (c) There must be enough descriptive information about the child, abductor, and/or suspect's vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help the case when the missing child is under 17 years of age and thought to be in imminent danger and/or criminal activity must be suspected in the disappearance.

**PROCEDURE FOR AMBER ALERT INITIATION**

9. The investigator's immediate supervisor must:
  - (a) Complete the Louisiana Amber Alert System Initial Reporting Form (available at <http://www.lsp.org/pdf/AmberAlert.pdf>), providing as much information as possible,
  - (b) Sign the document, and
  - (c) Electronically mail or fax the form with a photograph, if available, of the missing person to:
    - **Louisiana State Police (LSP), Troop F located in Monroe, LA.**  
**TELEPHONE #: 318-345-0000**
    - **EMAIL: [amberalert@dps.state.la.us](mailto:amberalert@dps.state.la.us)**
10. If a photograph is not sent with the Initial Reporting Form, one should be sent as soon as possible.

**CRITERIA FOR A SILVER ALERT**

11. The activation criteria for a Louisiana Silver Alert require that a law enforcement officer / agency confirms the missing adult is either:
  - a) **"Missing person with developmental disabilities"** (a person whose whereabouts are unknown; whose domicile at the time he is reported missing is in this state; and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the safety and health of himself, as determined by a local law enforcement agency), OR
  - b) **"Missing Senior Citizen"** (a person whose whereabouts are unknown; whose domicile at the time he is reported missing is in this state; whose age at the time he is first reported missing is 60 years of age or older; and whose disappearance poses a credible threat to the safety and health of himself, as determined by a local law enforcement agency).

**LOUISIANA STATE POLICE ACTIONS**

12. The LSP determines whether an AMBER Alert is authorized for outside Orleans Parish after considering the information contained on the form to ensure it meets the criteria for an AMBER Alert. The elements considered are:
  - (a) Is there reasonable belief by law enforcement that an abduction has occurred?
  - (b) Is the child under 17 years of age?
  - (c) Does the Department believe that the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily injury or death?
  - (d) Is there enough descriptive information about the victim and/or the abductor(s) to make the issuance of an AMBER Alert viable enough to assist in the recovery of the child?
  - (e) Has the Department entered the child's name and other vital data in National Crime Information Center (NCIC) using the Child Abduction code CA (using this code upon entry will automatically notify the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC))?
13. If the circumstances meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert to activate the statewide EAS, the alert process will be initiated.
14. Following an initial alert, an Amber Alert will be broadcast every 20 minutes, during the first three hours and every 30 minutes thereafter for the next two hours or until such time that an end of alert message is received from this department. The end of alert message will be further disseminated by the LSP.

15. Local and statewide broadcast stations will exercise their own independent discretion to repeat the broadcasts more frequently and determine the frequency in which the alert is re-broadcast following expiration of the above-mentioned five-hour period following the initial alert.
16. If the circumstances do not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert to activate the statewide EAS, the LSP may offer an alternate form of mass notification, including:
  - (a) An email alerting news media and law enforcement of a child's disappearance which does not meet the criteria of an AMBER Alert EAS activation. The email will include a statement that this department is requesting distribution of the information although it does not meet the criteria for AMBER Alert EAS activation.
  - (b) Requesting completion and submission of the Louisiana Level II Media Advisory Form (available at <http://www.lsp.org/pdf/AmberLevel2.pdf>).
17. Should information and evidence arise in an incident that does not initially meet the criteria for Amber Alert activation, the LSP should be immediately provided that information and asked to reconsider an Amber Alert activation of the EAS.

## MISSING CHILDREN

18. While investigating a possible missing child, (See also: **Chapter 41.23 – Missing Person Reporting**) District personnel shall consider the following elements as a possible Amber Alert case:
  - (a) The supported threat of imminent harm or death to the missing child.
  - (b) The age of the child (under 17 years of age).
  - (c) The time of initial report or police response vs. time of the disappearance.
  - (d) Reliable witness information.
  - (e) Possible domestic or parental dispute involving the child.
  - (f) Other facts that indicate the child was abducted or is in danger of serious injury or death (i.e., witnessed kidnapping, witnessed abuse, or violence toward the child).
19. If the criteria for an Amber Alert are met, district personnel will notify the Child Abuse Unit or Communication Services requesting a Child Abuse detective contact the investigating officer either by telephone or radio.
20. The investigating officer will supply the Child Abuse detective with all pertinent information substantiating the need for an Amber Alert. If the Child Abuse detective concurs that the criteria for an Amber Alert are met, he/she shall:
  - (a) Immediately notify the Commander of the Special Victims Division who shall in turn authorize an Amber Alert;
  - (b) Determine if the message should be regional or if various states should be included in the notification.
  - (c) Notify the PIO that an alert has been authorized, requesting he/she respond to the scene;
  - (d) Contact the Communications Services NOPD Liaison, supplying all information for the Amber Alert system initial reporting form; and
  - (e) Respond to the scene to take command of the investigation.
21. The Child Abuse detective will complete an **Amber Alert System Initial Reporting Form (Form #54)**, also referred to as a script. A copy of the report form will be forwarded to the Public Information Office prior to the Child Abuse detective completing his/her tour of duty.
22. Upon receipt of the form from the Child Abuse detective, the Louisiana State Police will be responsible for sending the EAS signal.

23. Upon receiving verification the child has been located, the Commander of the Special Victims Division will, at his/her discretion, instruct the Child Abuse detective to issue an **end of alert message** to the media via the established Amber Alert e-mail list. The PIO will disseminate the information to all media outlets via the City News Channel.
24. Investigating officers shall consider the use of an NCIC information bulletin to notify other jurisdictions outside Louisiana of the missing individual in cases where a child may have been abducted. All possible information shall be included in the bulletin but not be limited to the following:
  - (a) Physical description of the child, including clothing worn at the time abducted.
  - (b) Physical description of the individual suspected of the abduction, including a clothing description.
  - (c) All information as to the description of the vehicle used.
  - (d) Descriptions of accomplices.
  - (e) Direction of flight.
  - (f) The time of the offense.

### **NOLA READY ALERT CRITERIA**

25. The NOLA Ready Alert System should be used in circumstances in which:
  - (a) The subject is a missing child, senior, or vulnerable adult as defined by the Chapter;
  - (b) The missing individual's whereabouts are unknown, and the disappearance occurred in Orleans Parish, or the individual is believed to be located in Orleans Parish.
  - (c) Circumstances exist creating a credible threat to the missing individual's safety or health;
  - (d) Sufficient information is available for dissemination to the public that could assist in locating the missing individual; and
  - (e) The situation does not meet AMBER Alert or Silver Alert criteria.
26. The use of the NOLA Ready Alert System is only for those cases that do not meet AMBER or Silver Alert criteria and is not to be used in lieu of those alerts when the criteria are met.
27. Minimum NOLA Ready Alert content includes:
  - (f) A photo
  - (g) Identifying details such as;
    - Age
    - Sex
    - Height
    - Weight
    - Eye color
    - Hair color
    - Distinguishing marks such as tattoos or birthmarks
    - Aliases or nicknames
    - Vehicle or persons of interest
    - Last known location / date / time the individual was reported missing
    - Circumstances of disappearance
    - Medical or safety considerations
    - NOPD contact information
    - Clear instructions for providing tips
    - Any other information relevant to the circumstances of disappearance.

**Note: An official website link may be incorporated into the alert as a supplemental resource for more comprehensive information and ongoing updates.**

28. NOLA Ready Alerts shall be cancelled once the person is located or when the investigator, which supervisory approval, has determined that alerts would no longer aid the investigation.

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION – PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (PIO)**

29. The Public Affairs Division on-duty Public Information Officer shall have primary responsibility for sending the local Amber Alert message with information provided by the case investigator.
30. It shall be the responsibility of the individual sending the alert to broadcast alert tones, followed by a verbal notification of the abduction information over the City news channel and radio system. All television news stations currently monitor the channel, as does WWL Radio (the EAS Alert station for this area). This will notify all stations to be on the lookout for the information that will follow.
31. The PIO will e-mail the text of the script to the media which are on the established Amber Alert e-mail list, including any additional information and photographs of the missing child, if available.
32. Within five working days of an Amber Alert, the Communications Director shall request a meeting with the Special Victims Division Commander and representatives from the media to evaluate the operation of the Amber Alert, with the goal of improving future Amber Alerts.